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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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EXAMINER

MEINECKE DIAZ, SUSANNA M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3623

DATE MAILED: 06/16/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/941,046

Applicant(s)

EITEL ET AL.

Examiner

Susanna M. Diaz

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 29 March 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 10 March 2006 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. This final Office action is responsive to Applicant's amendment filed March 29, 2006.

Claims 1, 14, 27, 28, and 41 have been amended.

Claim 42 has been cancelled.

Claims 1-41 are pending.

2. A new examiner has taken over prosecution of the instant application.

3. The previously pending objections to the drawings are withdrawn in response to Applicant's submission of corrected drawings, which have been approved.

The previously pending objections to the specification are withdrawn in response to Applicant's specification amendments.

The previously pending objections to the claims are withdrawn based on further reevaluation of the claims by the Examiner.

The previously pending rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 101 is withdrawn in response to Applicant's claim amendments.

Response to Arguments

4. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-41 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection, necessitated by amendment.

Also, Examiner notes that, as per MPEP § 2144.03(C), the statements of Official Notice made in the art rejection have been established as admitted prior art since Applicant has not traversed the Examiner's assertions of Official Notice.

More specifically, the following statements of Official Notice (made by the previous Examiner in the non-final Office action mailed November 7, 2005) are now accepted in the record as admitted prior art:

- (1) sales per unit and time for entry of information are common ways of determining effectiveness and productivity of sales and collections agents, respectively,
- (2) errors per unit sale and errors per entered bill are common quality determinations for sales and collections,
- (3) average call handling time is a common efficiency determination,
- (4) comparing sales agents to each other is a common benchmarking initiative, and
- (5) bill payment information entries are common tasks related to collections agent duties.

Claim Objections

5. The numbering of claims is not in accordance with 37 CFR 1.126 which requires the original numbering of the claims to be preserved throughout the prosecution. When claims are canceled, the remaining claims must not be renumbered. When new claims

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are presented, they must be numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered claims previously presented (whether entered or not).

Misnumbered claim 28 (the second occurrence of claim 28) has been renumbered as claim 29.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

6. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

7. Claims 1-3, 7-10, 14-16, 20-23, 28-30, and 34-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Stuart et al. (US 2001/0032120).

Stuart discloses an apparatus for maintaining and improving a performance level of an agent performing a plurality of tasks, such apparatus comprising:

[Claim 14] a performance threshold for each task of the plurality of tasks (¶¶ 27, 48 --

A plurality of thresholds, e.g., triggering the generation of exception reports, may be set.

These thresholds may be set flexibly for individual call agents);

means for monitoring at least one of the plurality of agent tasks to measure a performance parameter of the agent in completing the at least one of the plurality of tasks (¶ 20 -- A stat pack measures the call agent/call center performance factors);

means for adjusting a respective performance threshold in response to a change in a parameter related to the at least one task (§§ 27, 48 -- A plurality of thresholds, e.g., triggering the generation of exception reports, may be set. These thresholds may be set flexibly for individual call agents. Management sets the thresholds and they may adjust them accordingly for different agents, e.g., based on the experience of each agent or the mix of calls handled by each agent);

means for notifying a supervisor when the measured performance parameter of the agent in performing a task exceeds the respective performance threshold of the task for the at least one task of the plurality of tasks (§§ 27, 48 -- A plurality of thresholds, e.g., triggering the generation of exception reports, may be set; §§ 13, 29 -- Both supervisors and the call agents are presented with the reports);

[Claim 15] means for comparing the measured performance parameter of a task with the respective performance threshold of the task for each task of the plurality of tasks (§§ 27, 48 -- A plurality of thresholds, e.g., triggering the generation of exception reports, may be set. These triggers are generated based on a comparison of measured performance of a task with a respective performance threshold for each monitored task);

[Claim 16] wherein the plurality of tasks further comprises a single repetitive operation (§ 20 -- Answering calls in a call center may be interpreted as a single repetitive operation; §§ 38, 44 -- Searching for information, e.g., as a directory assistance agent, is also indicative of a type of single repetitive operation);

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[Claim 20] wherein the measured performance parameter further comprises sales per unit time period (§ 38 -- The total dollar amount sold and/or the number of products/service units sold by a call agent are measured. Call agent productivity is ultimately expressed in terms of a call agent cost, which is measured for a certain unit of time, as seen in §§ 30-34; § 41 -- Time adjustments may be made for varying work hours of an agent; § 27 -- The flexible standards are compared to standards established for "session of the day, Saturday, Sunday or Holidays." This implies that a call agent's performance is measured in relation to a given time period, e.g., a unit time period);

[Claim 21] wherein the measured parameter further comprises errors per unit sale (§ 37 -- Disconnected calls, also referred to as "No Voice, No Answer" (NVNA), are seen as potentially lost sales and can therefore be interpreted as errors per unit sale);

[Claim 22] wherein the means for measuring the performance parameter further comprises means for measuring an average call handling time (§§ 28-29 -- The traditional measurement of average work time (AWT), or average calling handling time, is used in combination with cost data to assess call center performance);

[Claim 23] wherein the means for providing a performance threshold for each task of the plurality of tasks further comprises means for measuring a performance parameter of an exemplary agent in completing each task of the plurality of tasks (§ 27 -- The productivity of experienced operators may be measured. Also, standards may be set based on a "high performing norm (HPM), such as the 90th percentile").

[Claims 1-3, 7-10] Claims 1-3 and 7-10 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 14-16 and 20-23 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claims 28-30, 34-37] Claims 28-30 and 34-37 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 14-16 and 20-23 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Furthermore, Stuart teaches that the supervisor is notified via a display (¶¶ 13, 29 -- Both supervisors and the call agents are presented with the reports).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

8. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

9. Claim 27 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stuart et al. (US 2001/0032120), as applied to claims 1-3, 7-10, 14-16, 20-23, 28-30, and 34-37 above, in view of Official Notice.

[Claim 27] Claim 27 recites limitations already addressed by the rejection of claim 14 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Furthermore, Stuart sends reports to the supervisor alerting him/her when certain thresholds have been exceeded (¶¶ 13, 27, 39, 48); however, Stuart does not expressly disclose means for sorting the notifications to the supervisor based upon a relative magnitude by which the measured performance parameter exceeded the performance

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threshold. However, Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art of supervisory monitoring to sort alerts by urgency. For example, there are dashboard alert systems that color code different alerts (e.g., red being most urgent and yellow being less urgent but potentially requiring attention). The sorting of notifications assists management in more quickly identifying which problem areas need the most immediate attention. Since Stuart's reporting system assists management in identifying problems that may require some sort of resolution (e.g., additional training may be provided to the agent (§ 44) or agents could be scheduled in a more cost effective manner (§ 49)), the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Stuart's reporting capabilities to incorporate means for sorting the notifications to the supervisor based upon a relative magnitude by which the measured performance parameter exceeded the performance threshold in order to better assist Stuart's management personnel in more quickly identifying which problem areas need the most immediate attention, thereby increasing the chances of more quickly resolving any potential problems affecting call center performance.

10. Claims 4-6, 11-13, 17-19, 24-26, 31-33, and 38-41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stuart et al. (US 2001/0032120), as applied to claims 1-3, 7-10, 14-16, 20-23, 27-30, and 34-37 above, in view of Applicant's admitted prior art, and further in view of Official Notice.

[Claims 17-19, 24-26] Stuart monitors the productivity of various agents in a call center based on several factors, especially factors that contribute to the cost for each

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agent (§ 34). While Stuart does not expressly take into account the specific details recited in claims 17-19, Stuart does state, 'The present invention does not seek to limit the factors that contribute to the cost for each agent. Rather, the cost utilized for calculation of the C/SWT is intended to be the sum of all call agent cost data that is deemed important to the user.' (§ 34) The following statements have been established as Applicant's admitted prior art:

- (1) time for entry of information is a common way of determining effectiveness and productivity of sales and collections agents, respectively,
- (2) errors per entered bill are common quality determinations for sales and collections,
- (3) bill payment information entries are common tasks related to collections agent duties.

Additionally, Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art of call center management to run call centers that address billing transactions and questions. Since Stuart is open to the application of its invention in a call center affected by varying performance factors, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to adapt Stuart's call center performance monitoring system and method to function in a billing environment in order to make Stuart's invention more versatile and marketable to a wider body of customers, thereby increasing the marketing potential of Stuart's invention. As seen in Applicant's admitted prior art, various aspects of assessing the performance of billing and

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collections agents are old and well-known in the art as well. Additionally, Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art of billing-related call centers for agents to progress through various screens while assisting a customer. The length of time taken for progression through these screens would affect the length of time an agent spends assisting a customer, thereby contributing to the overall call length (a factor generally taken into account by Stuart, ¶¶ 28-29, 33). Therefore, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to utilize with the modified version of Stuart (adapted to a billing-related call center) more billing related performance factors, wherein the plurality of tasks parameter further comprises time between screens in a predetermined progression of screens (claim 17), wherein the plurality of tasks further comprises reciting information from at least some screens of the predetermined progression of screens (claim 18), wherein the means for measuring a performance parameter further comprises means for detecting errors in the recited information of the at least some screens (claim 19), wherein the plurality of tasks further comprises entry of bill and bill payment information from a plurality of customers into a billing computer (claim 24), wherein the measured parameter further comprises time for entry of each bill (claim 25), and wherein the measured parameter further comprises errors per entered bill (claim 26) in order to more successfully integrate Stuart into the billing call center environment, thereby making such a modified version of Stuart even more attractive to a wider range of customers and more greatly increasing its marketing potential.

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[Claims 4-6, 11-13] Claims 4-6 and 11-13 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 17-19 and 24-26 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claims 31-33, 38-40] Claims 31-33 and 38-40 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 17-19 and 24-26 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claim 41] Claim 41 recites limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 14, 27, and 28 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Conclusion

11. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Uckun (US 2003/0002653) -- Discloses a graphical method and system for visualizing performance levels in a time-varying environment.

McIlwaine et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,324,282) -- Discloses a method and system for delivery of individualized training to call center agents.

Hadden et al. (US 2003/0187723) -- Discloses a performance-based training assessment system.

12. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP

§ 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

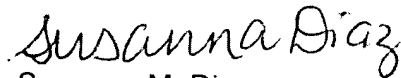
A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

13. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (571) 272-6733. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 10 am - 6 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



Susanna M. Diaz
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3623

June 12, 2006